



Allergy and Environmental Health Association
(Ottawa Branch)

Box 11428, Station H, Nepean, Ontario, Canada. K2H 7V1
Phone (613) 837-7173 or 224-0801

send reply to: 6267 Castille Court
Orléans. K1C 1X4

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Mr. Michael Decter,
Deputy Minister,
Ontario Ministry of Health,
10th fl - 80 Grosvenor,
Toronto, Ontario.

17 February 1992

Dear Mr. Decter,

In our discussion last fall you suggested that a first step in re-opening concerns of persons with environmental sensitivities would be to work on attitudes in the Ministry of Health. We agreed with you, and suggested that a forum of internal and external experts on sensitivities be organized, in part to familiarize Ministry staff with the fact that clinical ecology is not the only area of medicine where physicians are concerned about these problems.

I suspect that something greater than a simple educational forum will be required. Today I had a conversation with Dr. Schabas, of the Public Health Branch. According to Dr. Schabas, any needs of the environmentally sensitive that fall within the arena of public health are already covered, although he was not able to describe what any of those concerns are.

He resisted any suggestion that his Branch act on the recommendations of the Thomson Report as "that was done in 1985 and we've completely redefined our mandate since then". Dr. Schabas expressed an inability to identify even one concern of persons with sensitivities that relates to public health.

An administrator who claims that a subject is being looked after when he cannot recall any of the recommendations on the subject in the only significant provincial report on the topic, and cannot identify even one of the special needs of that group that relate to his area of activity (despite the fact that dozens have been related to him personally over the past several months) is not acting rationally.

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What provision exists within the Ministry of Health to deal with administrators who are acting in such an irrational manner, presumably due to an attitude problem stemming from ignorance?

The Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission offered your minister help in dealing with ignorance and discrimination on this subject. Have you taken her up on her offer?

It would seem important, at least to us, to correct the arrogant irrationality of your staff. As you well know, we have met a similar irrational response from the Mental Health Facilities Branch, where the physical and emotional abuse of persons with sensitivities is sustained by the attitude of the director of the branch, Howard Danson.

Just how widespread are negative attitudes within your Ministry on the subject of environmental sensitivities?

What will you do to compensate persons with sensitivities for the consequences?

Sincerely,

DUPLICATE

Chris Brown
Ottawa Branch President
(613) 837-7173